

**WATERVLIET CHARTER TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
APRIL 6, 2021**

Present: Joseph Stepich, Colleen Curtis, Louis Nordell, Linda Rizzo, Scott McKee, Deanna Heminger

Absent: Kevin Schuhknecht

Also Present: Chandler Nadeau

Vice-Chairman Stepich opened the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Roll Call was taken.

The minutes of the November 10, 2020 meeting were read. C. Curtis made a motion to approve the minutes as read. D. Heminger seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

During the first opportunity for the audience to address the Commission, C. Nadeau stated that he was in attendance to follow up a request to amend the zoning ordinance to permit a proposed brew-pub at 7139 Red Arrow Hwy. Mr. Nadeau was told that particular item is on the agenda for discussion at this meeting.

Policy Guidelines for Buying and Selling Township Owned Property

J. Stepich told the Commission that there is interest in constructing a medical marihuana grow facility in the industrial park. He further stated that the proposed developer offered to purchase 5 acres of property for \$20,000. Stepich went on to say that he brought this matter up to the Township Board at the February regular Board meeting and added that no action by the Board was taken on the matter.

He requested that the Planning Commissioners develop guidelines for purchasing and selling publicly owned property and, if negotiation is involved, designate who has the authority to negotiate on the Township's behalf. The Commissioners agreed that only one person, granted that authority, should be permitted to negotiate. D. Heminger suggested that, as a starting point, first establish a fair market price per acre. Stepich said he hoped that this approach of the Planning Commission delving into the matter and, after study and report, submitting a recommendation to the Township Board, may make the Board members feel more at ease with accepting and adopting a standardized procedure to deal with the disposition of property.

Recreational Marihuana

In the second agenda item, J. Stepich informed the Commissioners that the Township Board members were given a written request by one of the owners of Compassionate Care by Design, a medical marihuana provisioning facility located on Arnt Blvd., asking the Township Board to revisit their position relating to recreational marihuana facilities in the Township. Stepich asked the Commissioners to research the subject and, if progress permits, draft a preliminary ordinance. And, if taken that far, should the Township accept and adopt the ordinance, as they would normally do with any other ordinance, or determine if the action is of such importance to warrant its placement on a ballot. The Commission agreed that the matter should be addressed and agreed to do so at the next Planning Commission meeting on May 4, 2021. The Commission thought it would be prudent to request township legal counsel be in attendance.

Airport Park Soccer Field

C. Curtis stated that the Township received an estimate from Lounsbury Excavating to construct the soccer field for \$171,300. D. Heminger inquired if, "That included drainage and everything?" C. Curtis replied; "It appears that way." Curtis did add that a group from the Township is having a meeting with a representative from Lounsbury, on site, tomorrow (4-7-21) at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the project in more detail. It was stated that any interested Planning Commissioners are encouraged to attend. Curtis added that Lounsbury has constructed several multi-use sports fields in the past and are familiar with what is involved with their construction.

L. Nordell pointed out that this season, so far, has been dryer than usual for this time of the year and, as a result, the contractor should view the site during a time of extensive rain to gain a better understanding of where water flows and pools after inundation. J. Stepich noted that the individual from Lounsbury had been to the site during a period of extreme moisture and made notes; but, Stepich added, it would not be a waste of time for the contractor to review any preliminary drainage plans.

Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment

As discussed earlier in the meeting, an individual was in attendance to request an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance allowing the establishment of a beer brewing facility he is proposing for 7139 Red Arrow Hwy. Zoning Administrator R. Lohr explained that the individual, Chandler Nadeau, called the office requesting information about the establishment of the business at the above noted address. Lohr told the Commission that the current Zoning Ordinance makes no provision for the placement of either a bar, tavern or brew pub in the C-Commercial District and told him that his only recourse would be to request a zoning amendment to accommodate the use.

D. Heminger made a motion to proceed with the Zoning amendment of adding bars, taverns, brew pubs and mirco-breweries to Uses Requiring a Township Board Special

Land Use Permit in the C-Commercial District and to schedule the required public hearing for Tuesday May 4, 2021 at 2:05 p.m. C. Curtis seconded. The result of a roll call vote is as follows: L. Rizzo, yea; C. Curtis, yea; D. Heminger, yea; S. McKee, yea; J. Stepich, yea; L. Nordell, yea. Motion carried unanimously.

Endorsement of Property Purchase for County Park System Expansion

J. Stepich told the Commissioners that he recently had a conversation with Berrien County Parks Board Chairman, Richard Jenco regarding an offer he received of property for purchase that would significantly expand the County park system in Watervliet. Jenco told him that a member of the Woodruff family approached the County Parks Dept. with an offer to sell their 35 acre parcel on the Paw Paw River which would encompass all forested property northeast of the airport. Stepich went on to say that Jenco told him the County has some money for the purchase price of the property but not all. As such, Jenco inquired if the Township had any interest in contributing financially for the property's purchase.

Stepich went on to note that he would have to consult with Township legal counsel to determine if the contribution of township money toward property it will not own is even feasible. Through discussion, all the Commissioners voiced their favor with the prospect of purchasing the property. Stepich noted that, if purchased, this would form a park system in Watervliet that would encompass the west side of the Paw Paw River from Hayes Park to the north side of the airport. Stepich then requested the Planning Commissioners to form their thoughts and ideas that will lead to a recommendation in support of contributing township money to the property's purchase.

With nothing else said, C. Curtis made a motion to present correspondence of the Planning Commission's support of contributing finances toward the purchase of the Woodruff property for inclusion into the Berrien County Park System within Watervliet Charter Township. D. Heminger seconded. A roll call vote is as follows: L. Nordell, yea; L. Rizzo, yea; D. Heminger, yea; S. McKee, yea; J. Stepich, yea; C. Curtis, yea. The motion carried unanimously.

Survey of Elected and Appointed Township Officials

J. Stepich began discussion by requesting that the Planning Commission develop a process and procedure for evaluating the salary of both elected and appointed township officials. Stepich said that the Planning Commission can evaluate and recommend pay increases for the staff but not the elected officials. Stepich stated that he does not believe in elected officials giving themselves pay increases. However, he added, somehow it is done in every municipality. He would like the Commissioners to research what process and procedures varying municipalities use and give a report. D. Heminger stated that each Planning Commission member should pick their own municipalities to study and make a list to that; "...so everyone isn't calling the same city."

With no further business before the Planning Commission, C. Curtis made a motion to adjourn. L. Nordell seconded and the motion carried.
The meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert Lohr", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Lohr
Zoning Administrator